

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Trenton Man Accused of Possessing a Loaded Stolen Uzi Handgun as a Previously Convicted Felon

(More)

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TRENTON – A Trenton man made an initial appearance today in federal court on a charge that he possessed a loaded stolen Uzi semi-automatic handgun while being a previously convicted felon, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Victor Lopez, 23, allegedly possessed the firearm on March 29, 2005, when he was arrested by Trenton Police officers, according to a Criminal Complaint. According to the Complaint, Lopez was also wearing a law enforcement-style ballistic body vest at the time of his arrest.

U.S. Magistrate Judge John J. Hughes ordered that Lopez be detained pending the disposition of the charge. The charge of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm carries a statutory maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

According to the Complaint, Trenton Police officers were riding in an unmarked police vehicle in the area of Monmouth and Locust Streets, an area known for narcotics trafficking and violent crime, including recent gang-related violence.

The Complaint alleges that the officers observed three individuals, including the defendant, standing together and that the defendant walked from the street to the sidewalk while looking back the officers. The defendant allegedly reached toward his waistband with his right hand and walked behind a parked vehicle.

One of the officers exited the vehicle and ordered Lopez to stop and show his hands, however, the defendant fled while his hand remained at his waistband, according to the Complaint. Ignoring the officers commands, Lopez ran behind a parked minivan where the pursuing officer observed Lopez toss a handgun beneath the minivan, according to the Complaint.

According to the Complaint, the defendant was apprehended by the police officers and found to be wearing a ballistic body vest. The officers retrieved a loaded Uzi, model Eagle, .40 caliber semi-automatic handgun from under the minivan. A subsequent computer search revealed the weapon had been reported stole.

The charges in Criminal Complaints are merely accusations. All defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted beyond a reasonable doubt.

In determining an actual sentence, the district judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound

by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time

Christie credited officers with the Trenton Police Department, under the direction of Director Joseph Santiago, and the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Joseph L. Bocchini, Jr., with the arrest and investigation of the defendant.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Norv McAndrew of the Criminal Division in Trenton.

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Defense Attorney: Brian Reilly, Esq. Assistant Federal Public Defender